

## WHAT IS THE BENEFIT CAP?

The Benefit Cap is a **limit on the total amount of social security benefits** a household can receive, including Housing Benefit.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT IS THE BENEFIT CAP CLIFF EDGE?

The Benefit Cap is currently mitigated until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 in Northern Ireland. People who would be affected by it currently receive a payment in their benefits equal to what they would have lost because of the Benefit Cap. This means that households in Northern Ireland don't lose out because of it.

## WHO IS MOST AFFECTED BY THE BENEFIT CAP?

**Lone parents**, who are mostly women, and **larger families** are most likely to be affected by the Benefit Cap.<sup>2</sup> In Northern Ireland we have more larger families than other parts of the UK – 21.4% of families here have three or more children, compared to 14.7% of families in the UK.<sup>3</sup> 86% of the Benefit Cap mitigation payments are paid to women.<sup>4</sup> Child poverty rates have increased with one in four children now living in relative poverty.<sup>5</sup>

Ending the Benefit Cap mitigation would have the most **severe impacts on women and children**, contributing to **deepening poverty** in NI.

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<sup>1</sup> The Benefit Cap limits couples living with or without children and lone parents with dependent children to £423.46 a week, and limits single people who do not have children living with them to £283.71 a week (NI Direct, [The Benefit Cap | nidirect](#))

<sup>2</sup> Department for Communities, [Northern Ireland Welfare Supplementary Payment and Discretionary Support Schemes](#), p.5.

<sup>3</sup> Office for National Statistics – Families with dependent children by UK countries and English regions 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Department for Communities, [Northern Ireland Welfare Supplementary Payment and Discretionary Support Schemes](#), p.5.

<sup>5</sup> Department for Communities, [Northern Ireland Poverty and Income Inequality Report, 2022/23](#).

## HOW WILL PEOPLE BE IMPACTED BY THE LOSS OF THE BENEFIT CAP MITIGATION?

As of August 2024, 1370 individuals had their Benefit Cap mitigated through a Welfare Supplementary Payment – all of those impacted are families with children and the majority are lone parent families.<sup>6</sup> These families would feel the loss of the mitigation payment significantly and may tip them into crisis.

The latest statistics on the Benefit Cap show that it reduces weekly benefits by an average of £53.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, 15% of capped households lose more than £100 per week.<sup>8</sup> **Of those who saw their benefits capped, 82% were single-parent households, 18% were couples with children and 59% had three or more children.**<sup>9</sup> These figures indicate that **ending the Benefit Cap mitigation would negatively impact many families** currently protected by it.

## WHAT HAVE OTHERS SAID ABOUT THE BENEFIT CAP CLIFF EDGE?

The **Welfare Mitigations Review Independent Advisory Panel Report** (2022) identified the Benefit Cap as one of the elements of the social security system which contributes to increasing poverty and hardship.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, The Review stated ‘the case remained compelling for retaining existing mitigations including not implementing the social sector size criteria/bedroom tax and benefit cap for families’, and recommended the **extension of the Benefit Cap** ‘beyond three years as well’.<sup>11</sup>

## WHAT IS THE SOLUTION TO THE BENEFIT CAP CLIFF EDGE?

We want to see **Benefit Cap Extension Regulations** brought forward immediately on a permanent basis to protect families and children from financial hardship and poverty. Furthermore, we urgently ask elected representatives to advocate for Benefit Cap Extension Regulations in their daily work.

We welcome the recent announcement from the Minister for Communities that there are plans to bring forward legislation to extend the Benefit Cap beyond 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. We look forward to reading the detail of these legislative proposals, as we continue campaigning to sustain and strengthen vital welfare reform measures to protect people across Northern Ireland.

We invite you to lend your support to this campaign.

If you require any further information, please contact  
The **Cliff Edge Coalition** via [holly.knox@lawcentreni.org](mailto:holly.knox@lawcentreni.org)

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<sup>6</sup> Department for Communities, [Benefit Cap Publication](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>10</sup> Department for Communities, [Welfare Mitigations Review](#), p.32.

<sup>11</sup> [Ibid.](#), pp 35 - 134.